

Religious Inquirer.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH I. 18.

EDITED BY REV. RICHARD CARRIQUE.—HARTFORD, CONN. G. W. KAPPEL, PRINTER.

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TO THE PATRONS OF THE RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

THE subscriber having taken upon himself, the editorial department of this paper, considers it necessary to express to the subscribers, the assurance, that he fully accords in the views of those gentlemen, who have associated themselves for the promotion of Christian knowledge; whose views and designs are ably delineated in the prospectus, which has been laid before the public.

In the prospectus it is said "the proposed work is intended to be a Repository of free inquiry and dispassionate discussion, upon the important subject to which it will be primarily devoted; and its principal objects will be, to attempt to counteract that tendency to superstition, which is incident to human nature; to explain and illustrate the Sacred Scriptures, as they are understood by those who believe in the universal benevolence of God, and that from Him cometh every good and perfect gift; to inspire just and exalted ideas of the divine character and goodness; to support and extend the authority and dominion of reason; to combat by the all-powerful weapons of argument and truth, dangerous errors and prejudices, and the base attempts to enslave the human mind, and to erect a temporal dominion upon the moral weakness and delusions of man; to disseminate useful information, rational, liberal, and enlightened sentiments; to present, in the images of truth, the deformity of vice, the odiousness of bigotry and intolerance, and the loveliness of virtue and charity—in fine, to extend the knowledge, as the only means of promoting the happiness and peace, of mankind."

In accordance with those views, and to accomplish the desired object, the labors of the Editor will be directed, to bring the mind of the reader, to a careful examination of the Scriptures of TRUTH, that they may have a correct understanding of the grace of God, that bringeth Salvation; and to a critical review, of the various religious sentiments, which are propagated with so much zeal at the present day.

The Editor, persuaded that a knowledge of the divine nature, and character of God, is necessary to the promotion of the happiness and peace of mankind, and the only means of delivering the mind from blind fanaticism, and gross superstition, will endeavor to lay before the reader those evidences of the goodness, and mercy of our Heavenly Father, which nature daily unfolds to our

view, and which the Scriptures abundantly furnish; that men may be enabled to comply with the exhortation of the Apostle—"To sanctify the Lord in their hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh" them "a reason of the hope that is in" them "with meekness and fear;" to live in the exercise of all the social, and Christian virtues; and enjoy life, in the performance of every rational and moral obligation.

The history of the world, furnishes ample evidence that ignorance has ever subjected man, to the imperious control of the cunning and designing. Hence that undue influence the clergy have had over the minds of men, in ages past, especially before the reformation. The uninformed mind has ever been easily wrought upon by fear, and has always been subject to that blind fanaticism, which has filled its votary with an infuriated zeal, and led to the commission of crimes, the knowledge of which, fills our souls with horror even at the present day.

The sun of Science which cheers our happy country with its inspiring rays—the ease with which the knowledge of letters is obtained by all classes, have opened to the mind the principles and designs of civil government, and led the way to the full enjoyment of every right and privilege to which we are entitled as the gift of heaven.

Among those privileges, is that, of reading the scriptures for ourselves—of bringing the sentiments which may be taught us, to the standard of truth—of comparing them with the "law and the testimony"—and to determine for ourselves as to their correctness.

Whatever interest some men may have in deceiving others—no man, can expect to gain any thing by being made the dupe of another. In the concerns of Religion, man in order to be happy must exercise his own understanding.—God requires that "they that worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth." In order to do this, we must become acquainted with the mind and will of God as revealed in his word.

To excite the minds of men to this work—that they may emulate the noble BEREANS who "searched the Scriptures daily"—that through the knowledge thereof, they may become wise unto salvation, and future generations saved from blind fanaticism and the baneful effects of superstition, the public are presented with the Religious Inquirer.

This title has been chosen, as best expressing the motives and designs of the publishers

who wish to rouse the mind to an inquiry into these important matters. Our columns therefore, will always be open to a free and candid discussion. To disseminate truth is our object; to cultivate the Christian virtues our earnest desire.

The Editor, guided by that love which "worketh no ill to its neighbor" participating in the feelings of the publishers, is desirous of opening the way to religious inquiry.—He can have no interest in propagating error. The sentiments he will advocate, and attempt to defend are those, of *Universal benevolence*—peace and good will to men—Sentiments, to which, a large portion of our fellow men, are at present opposed. Sentiments as yet unpopular—which nought but a full conviction of their truth, could have induced him to present to the view of mankind, and which he will endeavor to defend by rational argument, duly supported by the divine testimony.

However he may differ in his views, as respects the ultimate end, of all rational beings, from his brethren of other denominations, and may often be under the necessity of pointing out, what he considers as erroneous in their sentiments; yet he assures them, that as it is his duty, according to the spirit of CHRIST, to love them as himself, he will always endeavor by the help of God, to cherish a friendly, and charitable disposition towards them; and as far as he can consistent with truth, avoid wounding the feelings of any of his brethren—yet they must expect a firm, and steady adherence to truth, according to the conviction of his own mind—and the defence of the same, according to the best of his abilities.

RICHARD CARRIQUE.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

"Have you a HOPE."

This, is frequently asked by those, who are zealously engaged in what is termed "*Revivals*;" and it implies, that it is probable the person interrogated is destitute of a hope. In reply to this question, we would say, that there is not a single individual of the human race, possessing sanity of mind, but what is possessed of a *hope*, a fond desire, a longing after immortality.

It has pleased an infinitely wise and beneficent creator to bring into existence a race of rational and intelligent beings as the happy recipients of his goodness and mercy; and who, from the first opening of the mind, to an understanding of good and evil, happiness and misery, search after, what in their view will most tend to their happiness. Subject to disappointments in this life, and often involved in *ills natural or moral*, HOPE is essentially necessary to the existence of rational beings; hence the wise man hath said "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and we may safely say, that deprived of all *hope*, man would drop into the darkness of despair, and insanity terminate in suicide.

The scriptures are explicit on this subject—see Rom. viii. 20, "for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." Thus it is evident, that while "the creature was made subject to vanity," to sin, to errors &c. with all their attendant consequences; to ills, both natural and moral, it pleased the all wise creator, to make the creature the subject of that hope, which would enable him to endure the miseries attendant on this life, and buoy him up under their pressure. But what did this HOPE embrace, to which the creature was made subject? Answer verse 21, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." A deliverance then from this bondage of corruption, is the blessing hoped for, and the happy portion of every intelligent being.

Was the question asked, "is your hope founded on those rational and scriptural evidences, which give you the assurance that what you earnestly desire will be accomplished; and do you enjoy the certain prospect of the full fruition of your hopes? there would be propriety in the inquiry. For it must be admitted, that through ignorance, inexperience, or want of due reflection, on the mutability of all things, appertaining to the world, and frequently from a want of proper reflection on the probability, or improbability of the accomplishment of our wishes, we suffer ourselves to be led away by strong desires, and form expectations of the attainment of the object, without inquiring into the probability of succeeding. We are therefore continually afflicted with doubts, the effects of uncertainty, and tormented with an apprehension that we shall fail in our desires.

Hope is produced by faith, and desire. Faith in the probable certainty of the event taking place, and a desire it should; so that while on the one hand we cannot have a steadfast hope without faith, neither on the other can we have hope without desire. There is, in every rational being, a repugnancy to misery, pain and sorrow, and an earnest desire for happiness, a desire, which extends itself beyond the confines of mortality.

Have we then sufficient evidence to demonstrate to the mind, the possibility, or certainty of obtaining what we so much desire, even life and immortality, that we can enjoy a rational hope and receive consolation in the day of affliction. The least that any professor of religion will say is, that we have evidence of its being possible, that man may be happy. Now if it is barely rendered possible that man may obtain eternal life, there being no absolute certainty, the mind must be forever left in a state of uncertainty, and perplexing doubt. Every intelligent being must be sensible, that a state of doubt and uncertainty is to say the least, one of the most unhappy situations in which man can be placed.

(To be continued.)

FOR THE INQUIRER.

A concise view of the first principles of Religion.

In a comprehensive sense, Religion consists of the moral relations which subsist between God and man, as morality in the same sense, consists of the relations which subsist between man and man. Both religion and morality may be divided into two parts, *theory* and *practice*; the first consists of a definition or explanation of these relations, and the last of an observance of the obligations and duties which they impose. The *practical* part of religion is, undoubtedly, whether, viewed with the eye of reason, or the light of revelation, of infinitely the greatest importance—Indeed it is difficult to conceive that the theory, is, in *itself*, of any moment; but as the obligations and duties of religion which constitute its practical part, are in a great measure deducible from its theory, it is evident that there is a very intimate connection betwixt the two, and that when the former is *radically* erroneous, the latter can neither be pure nor salutary—As every one's sense of religious obligation, depends in a great measure upon his notions of the theory of religion, the latter becomes important from the influence which it has upon the former. It is in this view of the subject, and this alone, we apprehend, that matters of *faith* are of any importance; there is no *merit*, in our belief, or theoretical opinions as to religion, when they are correct, and no demerit, when erroneous, except as they affect our dispositions, and influence our conduct.—This appears to be in conformity to the idea of the Apostle when he says that faith without works is *dead*—That is, there is no merit in faith, any further than it produces good works; without this it is a mere sound of brass and tinkling cymbal.—Even if it could be supposed that a man's opinion were *per se*, of importance, it would be difficult to perceive that there can be any *merit* in them, as a man has not the exercise of his *will* upon this subject; he cannot believe what he pleases, and reject what he pleases; the operations of the mind in the investigation of truth, are governed by fixed principles, inseparable from the constitution of it; we cannot believe any proposition without evidence, much less against evidence; neither can we withhold our belief when the evidence is satisfactory and conclusive.

From these considerations, as well as from the impressive lessons of history, it is apparent that an undue importance has been attached to the theoretical and speculative parts of religion. Every person the least conversant with history, whether civil or ecclesiastical, must be sensible of the frightful evils which have sprung from this source, and which, during many centuries at least, were the greatest scourge that ever afflicted the human race. In the violent and bitter controversies which have distracted and disgraced the christian world, about speculative religion, its practical parts have often been entirely disregarded, and mankind have been called upon to witness the

horrid sight, of the furious and bigoted priest, clothed at once in the vestments of the church, and the armour of war, spreading the mild doctrines of christianity, under the banner of the cross, with his creed in one hand and his sword in the other. Fortunately these times have gone by, and we trust never to return; we have reason to be thankful that we live in an age of comparative light, and in a land of civil and religious freedom—Yet at the present time and in this country, much remains to be done; inveterate prejudices, false and absurd doctrines, and an illiberal and unchristian spirit, the relics of a dark and barbarous age still remain, to a considerable extent. It is due to the age in which we live and to the rights and privileges which we enjoy, that the great work of the reformation which was begun the early part of the fifteenth century should progress, until the dangerous errors which remain, calculated to debase the spirit and impair the usefulness of christianity, should be lost, in the glorious blaze of truth.

We have made these remarks, to shew in what light we view the theoretical part of religion, and the considerations upon which we attach importance to it.—While we conceive it important, that all essential errors, in point of doctrine, which tend to impair or destroy the benificent spirit, and the practical effects of religion, should be removed, we deem it of little concernment what sentiments prevail upon all minor points of doctrine, producing no practical results.

We will now proceed to inquire, what are the primary principles of the theory of religion? These, we conceive consist of the attributes of God, and his fixed and eternal will and purposes towards his creatures. A knowledge of these, so far as they have been revealed and so far as man is capable of understanding them, will afford all the light which can be obtained, and all which can be of any use, as to theoretical principles. But how are we to acquire a knowledge of the attributes of the divine character and of his purposes towards his creatures? We answer from his works, and from divine revelation. The book of nature, which, as it has been elegantly expressed, is "elder scripture writ by God's own hand," and the book of revelation are the only sources from whence, we can derive any light upon these sublime and important subjects. As the whole practical part of religion consists in loving God and our neighbor, so the whole theoretical part consists in a knowledge of the divine character and his purposes. This is the first article in every religious creed, whether Christian, Mahometan, or Pagan, and where this is correctly understood there can be little danger of errors in points of minor importance. To know God is life eternal, and to understand the councils of his will, is to unfold the whole duty of man. He who has just ideas of God cannot have erroneous ideas as to religion; and it is hardly to be supposed that he can be wanting in practical piety. What a sub-

lime contemplation is the work of creation, even if we confine our views to the globe which we inhabit; but if we extend them to the solar system and not stopping there, attempt to stretch our thoughts through the immensity of space, and view, innumerable worlds—sphere connecting sphere, and system connecting system, all ballanced in open space, and revolving in their orbits in perfect harmony—how wonderfully sublime is the conception—the mind conscious of its limited apprehension, shrinks from the awful contemplation—

“These are thy glorious works Almighty Father,
Thine this universal frame; thus wonderful fair;
How passing wonder *He* who formed it such.”

ORIGEN.

(To be Continued.)

The following is from the *Christian Intelligencer*, printed in Portland, Me. edited by the Rev. RUSSELL STREETER; a work, which from the well known talents of the editor, promises much good to the humble inquirer after truth.—*Ed.*

ARE CHRISTIANS CHARITABLE?

Professors of the Christian religion are of all men most inexcusable, in the exhibition of a cruel and persecuting spirit. Every period, in the history of that exalted Leader whom we profess to follow, is a reproof upon such conduct. Reader, let us for a moment seriously meditate upon this important point. Frequently as the subject of religious toleration and christian charity is discussed by the preachers, and assented to by the people, do we behold a general and habitual exercise of that heavenly principle, among the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus? Do we see a disposition to pity each other's imperfections, feelingly correct a neighbor's errors, appreciate his virtues, and defend his good name from unreasonable aspersions? Do we see a professor's face, wet with tears of grief, on witnessing the deterioration of a christian friend, of another sect, from the holy profession which he had made before angels and men? When did the Orthodox professor improve the earliest opportunity to visit the dissenter from the faith, mildly to admonish the rashness of his conduct, notify him of an offence which would be joyfully forgiven on seeing a reformation, or warn him of an attack, which he might expect from envy, ambushed in secret slander? We interrogate in vain. The night is speechless, and the morning blushes to acknowledge the truth. Religion is the motto; calumny, the essay. If reformation take place, defamation is certainly to follow. Ah me! and are these the features of the renowned offspring of Paradise regained? Does this reflect the light of him, whose life was a continued demonstration of the purest benevolence, and his kingdom not of this world? The laborers have neglected the vineyard for the cultivation of stony places, or sowed tares instead

of wheat, or the good ground has become sterile and unfruitful! Charity, the plant of celestial growth, has not received proper attention. Briars and thorns have been watered and sunned, while the rose of Sharon was injured with a pruning-hook. It has been shaded in a forest of brambles! I adjure you, O Christians! by the sacred ensign of our profession, and the echo of groans from Calvary, and the memory of all which is dear and glorious in the history of the risen Saviour, that you henceforward add to your other christian graces, charity. Then shall the neglected exile return to her native residence, the hearts of Christians, and smile with mild radiance in every section of the christian church.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

REASON AND REVELATION.

Among the many errors which have been inculcated, there is none more absurd, and certainly none more dangerous, and which tend more directly to degrade mankind to the level of the brutes, to expose them to every species of fraud and imposition, and to establish that worst of all despotisms, an absolute dominion over the mind and conscience, than the doctrine, that *reason* is not a safe guide in matters of religion.

It is hardly three centuries since the sacred scriptures were withheld entirely from the people; they were locked up in unknown tongues, and few except the clergy permitted to make any use of that book, which was claimed to form the only rule of our faith and practice, and to contain the glad tidings of life and immortality. What a monstrous absurdity; to maintain that our whole duty to God and to one another, was to be learnt from the scriptures, and at the same time to withhold them from the people.

The ground upon which this proceeding was attempted to be justified, was, that the people were not capable of understanding the scriptures, and that if they were translated into the vulgar tongue they would be corrupted and perverted, and the uniformity of faith destroyed.

These sentiments, perhaps a little softened, still prevail in the Catholic church, and have been exhibited within a few years, by an opposition to the circulation of the Bible. We are indebted to the reformation for the correction of this great error, and for the general circulation of the Scriptures in different popular languages. But although the people now have an opportunity, and are encouraged to read the scriptures; yet are they not in a great measure, prevented from deriving any benefit from this privilege? Is not every expedient resorted to, to prevent their forming opinions and judging for themselves, either as to matters of faith or worship? Among the most efficient causes which have defeated the salutary effects that the general circulation of the scriptures was calculated to produce, have been the formation of *artificial creeds*; which, having received the stamp of orthodoxy,

have been represented as containing the truth, and the whole truth of the scriptures, so that to deny any article of these human creeds, has been deemed a sin not less heinous than to deny the authority of divine revelation itself.

But we do not intend to examine this subject at this time; it is another cause, calculated to impair the good effects of the free use of the scriptures, that was intended to be noticed in this article, (*viz.*) *the practice of lessening and in some cases of entirely destroying the authority of reason in matters of religion.* The human understanding either is, or is not, necessary to enable us justly to appreciate, and to give their proper effect, to the scriptures. Will any one dare to maintain that revelation, can produce the good effects intend without the aid of reason? If so, then its influence must be altogether independent, of the ordinary principles which govern the mind and controul the conduct of man. Its operation must be a violation of the ordinary laws, by which the human mind is influenced, and consequently it can be no less than a living and perpetual miracle. No subject can have any influence whatever upon the mind, unless it is understood by it, and its influence will be according to the understanding of it. Will it be asserted that revelation can have an influence without its being understood? If it can, its operation must certainly be *miraculous*, and man, so far as it respects the effect of revelation cannot be considered as a *rational* being, but as a mere machine, being influenced and controled without the concurrence or even consciousness of his will or understanding. Will any one maintain this? will any one assert that the operation of revelation upon the human mind is a perpetual miracle? If they will not, then they must admit that revelation can operate upon the mind only according to known and established laws; that is, through the will and the understanding. If they admit this, let them not say that reason is not a safe guide in religion, and that it is not the proper test by which we are to judge of revelation.

It seems at the present day to be admitted that it is safe and even necessary to be governed partially by reason in religious concerns; but when any thing to which the creed-mongers have given the infallible stamp of orthodoxy, is found to be inconsistent with reason, or to present to the human understanding a perfect absurdity, like the doctrine of transubstantiation &c, then it is said that these things are a mystery, and beyond the reach of our understanding, and that reason must not be relied upon. If there is any thing in revelation which we cannot understand, then it is no revelation at all as it respects us; or it is a revelation, which requires to be revealed. Are we to be told that God has given a revelation of his will to his creatures for their benefit, and at the same breath to be informed that it is so mysterious they are not capable of understanding it?

But even this answer, as absurd as it is, would not help the advocates of this degrading doctrine,

out of the difficulty, were we to admit it to be true; or rather, it would involve them in another, equally serious. If there are mysteries in revelation which cannot be understood by human reason, how did the creed-makers understand them? They have undertaken to explain these mysteries, which *they say* cannot be understood by human reason. Do they claim to be inspired? some fanatics indeed have claimed this, but no sober man will be thus presumptuous. Neither Calvin, Luther, or any of the reformers made any such claim.

But if it is established that revelation cannot be understood without the aid of reason, then the only remaining question is, whether each individual shall make use of his own reason, or whether a few shall use theirs for all the rest. Those who are most disposed to underrate the authority of reason in matters of religion, are not willing to renounce their own; they only wish to have others renounce theirs. If they can persuade them to do this, it is not difficult to perceive the consequences. The many have resigned to the few their reason and their conscience.—They do not think of judging for themselves upon religious subjects; they receive all their ideas from others, without examination, and swallow down the greatest absurdities without a scruple. What an alarming despotism is this? what tyranny on the one hand and what degradation on the other.—That man must be a slave indeed, who has given up to another his reason and conscience upon a subject of such infinite importance. It would be scarcely more absurd for a man to put out his own eyes, that he might have the benefit of the eyes of another, who was to serve him as a guide. We will conclude these remarks with a short extract from the writings of a man* not more distinguished by his genius, exalted as it was, than by his solid and rational piety, "*Reason is natural revelation whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within their natural faculties. Revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God—So that he that takes away reason to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both, and does much the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes the better to view the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope.*"

* Locke.

The spirit of true religion breathes mildness and affability. It gives a native unaffected ease to behaviour; it is social, kind and cheerful; far removed from that gloomy and illiberal situation, which clouds the brow, sharpens the temper, dejects the spirit, and teaches men to fit themselves for another world, by neglecting the concerns of this.

"The tree is known by his fruit."

Whatever pretensions men may make to piety or religion, it is but fair that they should be tried, by the standard which they acknowledge, the only decisive rule of faith and practice. Professors of religion must excuse us, for not taking their profession, or declaration of having met with a change, or of being born again, and having joined some church, as sufficient evidence of their being the disciples and followers of Christ. The Pharisees of old made great pretensions to holiness and righteousness; they loved to make long prayers; they fasted often, professedly were great friends to God, and were careful not to associate with sinners. But not withstanding all this, they are charged with hypocrisy and deceit.

Professions then are not sufficient evidence of the existence of religion in the heart, nor is a close attention to a certain round of what is called religious duties or ceremonies; for all this may be done by those who feel not the life giving power of the gospel. Men may do all this and yet possess as did the Jews, a most cruel, bitter, persecuting spirit. Jesus said, "by their fruits ye shall know them." Paul, says "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Now if these are the fruits of the spirit of God, have we not a right to expect, that they, who say they are not of this world, but of God, will show these fruits in their daily practice; and if we do not behold them, have we not a right to say, notwithstanding their profession, that they are not the disciples of Christ.

He who styled himself the good shepherd, has given us this exhortation, "come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest—take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls;" we also read of the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God, is of great price." Meekness is a fruit of the spirit, and we are directed; "in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves."

Would those who profess so much religion at the present day, be willing that we should apply this rule, and measure their pretensions. If we should, shall we be able to find this spirit of meekness, this lowliness of mind, which esteems others better than itself; shall we not rather find a spirit of pride—a vain boasting of being better than others—a disposition to say "stand by, come not nigh for I am holier than thou." Whoever has noticed the character and conduct of professors must be sensible, that instead of following the example of him who was "meek and lowly of heart," and who said "my kingdom is not of this world," they have been aiming at wealth, dominion, popularity, and power, both spiritual and temporal; and the candid observer must at once see, that in room of that heart humbling,

and pride subduing doctrine taught by Christ and his Apostles, they cherish that pride, which causes divisions, and prevents the exercise of the charities of domestic and social life. Should this pride continue to increase as it has for a few years past, preventing people from visiting each other unless they are members of the church, and agree in matters of religion; and producing the greatest extravagance in building and decorating houses for public worship—making them the resort of the *fashionable*, we may expect soon to have none admitted without procuring tickets for that purpose lest the BEAUTIFUL house should be defiled by the presence of sinners, and the pious fashionables, and spiritually proud, wounded in their feelings, by associating with the less favored part of community. We may also expect a select choir of singers, who shall all be of the regenerate, for according to the bigotry and superstition of times past, a sinner has no business to sing praises to God; or for fear that one who is not regenerated, fashionable and respectable, will injure the voices, or defile the praises offered by the favored and pious few.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, &c.; but do we find a disposition to cultivate peace—Yes, if we will tamely submit to their will, and yield to their dictation; but once question the truth of their doctrine, or have an opinion of your own which you mean to exercise, and you at once find the amount of the love, joy, peace, and longsuffering which reigns in the heart.

Dr. Watt's Thoughts on Free Inquiry.

Nor should a student in divinity imagine that our age is arrived at a full understanding of every thing, which can be known from the Scriptures. Every age since the reformation has thrown some further light on different texts and paragraphs of the Bible, which have been long obscured by the early rise of Antichrist; and since there are at present many difficulties and darkneses hanging about certain truths of the Christian religion, and since several of these relate to important doctrines, such as the origin of sin, the fall of Adam, the person of Christ, the blessed trinity, and the decrees of God, &c. which do still embarrass the minds of honest and inquiring readers, and make work for noisy controversy, it is certain there are several things in the Bible yet unknown, and not sufficiently explained; and it is certain that there is some way to solve these difficulties, and reconcile these seeming contradictions. And why may not a sincere searcher of truth, in the present age, by labour, diligence, study, and prayer, with the best use of his reasoning powers, find out the proper solution of those knots and perplexities, which have hitherto been unsolved, and which have afforded matter for angry quarrelling? Happy is every man, who shall be favoured of heaven, to give a helping hand towards that introduction of the blessed age of light and love.

Improvement of the Mind, chap. I.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.

It is a principle laid down by philosophers, and acceded to by all people of good sense, that every effect has its cause. The Apostle John in his first epistle iv. 19, informs us, "that we love him, (that is God,) because he first loved us." If the Apostle had a correct understanding on this subject, and it is admitted that the love of God is the CAUSE which produces love in his creatures—The following questions, are considered as worthy of attention, which the reader is requested to answer satisfactorily to himself.

Quest. 1. If God's love to us, is the cause which produces love in us, to him, can this love be produced in the heart of man, without his coming to the knowledge of the love of God?

Quest. 2d. If God does not love a certain individual of the human race, is it possible for that individual to love God?

Quest. 3d. Can a manifestation or display of love be made, if love does not exist?

Quest. 4th. If a knowledge of the love of God is necessary to produce love in the creature, are those consistent, who are laboring to impress upon the mind, the terrifying idea of the wrath and anger of God?

Quest. 5th. If God's love is the cause which produces love in man, will wrath and anger produce the same effect.

Quest. 6th. If Divine love is the only CAUSE that can produce love in man, and a manifestation of this love to the understanding is the means by which love is produced, can there be any danger in preaching that the "Lord is good unto all, and" that "his tender mercies are over all his works."

—
"Stir not the fire with a sword."

This, was one of the maxims of Pythagoras, who has been called the priest of nature. However fanciful the doctrine of the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, may appear, it was evidently founded in the idea of universal beneficence. It was an appeal to the selfish passions of men, calculated to excite their sympathy and restrain their injustice and cruelty, not only to each other, but to the brute creation, by holding out the idea that their own souls in a subsequent state of existence, might animate not only the most degraded of the human species, but even the vilest reptile. The philosophy of this school, like that of most others among the ancients, consisted very considerably of moral maxims. These were calculated to restrain the violence of the passions and to inculcate peace and benevolence. The above is one of these apothegms, which is intended to remind us, not to irritate those who are already angry—not to return violence, for violence—not, because others are in a rage, to fly into a rage ourselves.—It is evident that this maxim approximates towards some of the moral doctrines taught by our Saviour, but it falls greatly short of the principle of "loving our enemies and rewarding evil with good."

INDIAN ANECDOTE.

A few years since, whilst the mistaken zeal of many good men, led them to think that their red brethren of the forest might be Christianized before they were civilized,—a missionary was sent out amongst them to convert them to the Christian faith. The Missionary was unfortunately one of those preachers who delight in speculative and abstruse doctrines, and who teach the inefficacy of all human exertions in obtaining salvation. He called the Indians together to here what he called the Gospel. The Sachem or Chief of the tribe to which he was sent, came with the rest. The Missionary in the course of his sermon, (which was upon the very simple and intelligible doctrine of election) undertook to prove, that some were made to be saved, and some to be damned, without any regard to their good or bad conduct. As an illustration of his doctrine he cited the case of Jacob and Esau, and attempted to show that God loved the one and hated the other before either of them was born. The Sachem heard him attentively, and after meeting invited him to his wigwam. After some conversation, the Sachem thus addressed the Missionary. "Sir, me tell you a story: My wife have two boys, twins; both of them as pretty as the two you tell me about today. One of them she love and feed him; the other she let lie on the ground crying. I tell her take him up, or he die. She no mind me. Pretty soon he die. Now what shall I do to her?"—Why, said the Missionary, she ought to be hung! "Well," said the Sachem, "then you go home and hang your God, for you say he do just so. You no preach any more here, unless you preach more good than this." The Missionary finding himself amongst a people too enlightened to give credence to his narrow and heart-revolting principles thought it expedient to seek a new field of labor.

HERESY, AS IT HAS BEEN UNDERSTOOD.

When Latimer (afterwards bishop of Worcester,) had obtained great celebrity by his zeal and efforts against the errors of popery, Dr. Buckingham, prior of Black Friars, endeavoured from the pulpit to expose the dangerous tendency of his opinions; and particularly inveighed against his heretical notion, of having the scriptures translated into English. "If that heresy," said he, "were to prevail, we should soon see an end to every thing useful among us. The ploughman, reading, that 'if he put his hand to the plough and should happen to look back, he was unfit for the kingdom of God,' would soon lay aside his labor. The baker likewise, reading, that 'a little leaven will corrupt his lump,' would give us very insipid bread. The simple man also, finding himself commanded 'to pluck out his eyes,' in a few years we should have the nation full of blind beggars."

POETRY.

The following Hymn on the love of truth from the pen of the celebrated DR. DODDRIDGE, is considered an evidence of the correctness of our views, in publishing the *Inquirer*.

THE LOVE OF TRUTH.

IMPOSTURE shrinks from light,
And dreads the curious eye;
But Christian truths the test invite,
They bid us search and try.
A meek inquiring mind,
Lord, help us to maintain;
That growing knowledge we may find,
And growing virtue gain.
With understanding blest,
Created to be free,
Our faith on man we dare not rest,
Subject to none but thee.
Give us the light we need,
Our minds with knowledge fill;
From noxious error guard our creed,
From prejudice, our will.
The truth thou shalt impart,
May we with firmness own;
Abhorring each evasive art,
And fearing thee alone.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

"Understandest thou, what thou readest."

As an Eunuch, belonging to the court of Candace queen of the Ethiopians, was riding in his chariot reading the prophecy of Isaiah—Philip addressed him with the question, "Understandest thou, what thou readest?" to which the Eunuch replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me." The same question may come with equal force to us all, and deserves serious attention. Many are very fond of boasting, of the number of times they have learned or said their catechism, of, how often, they have read their bible or testament through by course, &c. But after all dear friend, "Understandest thou, what thou readest?"

It is not by running the eye over many pages, or by reading the *Bible* through a number of times, to have it, to say, how often we have done this, that will make us wise unto salvation, or give us the knowledge of the TRUTH. Nor, is it by reading a certain portion of the scriptures, by way of duty, morning, noon, or night, that will give us an understanding of the gospel. It is owing, to this careless mode of reading, that we find so many professors of religion, entirely destitute of system, and incapable of communicating, or defending their own sentiments—unable to give "a reason of the HOPE that is in them," and under the necessity of considering their doctrine as wrapt up in mystery.

To the above question, some will perhaps reply with the Eunuch "how can I except some man should guide me." To those we freely offer the hand of inquiry, to guide them in the path of understanding.—Of others we would inquire, have you not had men to guide you, who came to you in the name of the LORD? Have you not under their guidance, been reading the scriptures many years? Are you not engaged in sending the *Bible* to foreign countries? The question is to you "Understandest thou, what thou readest." Or are you sending a volume to others, that is unintelligible to yourselves? Men and brethren, how can we with propriety recommend a volume to others, that we do not understand ourselves. Is it not necessary then, that we clearly comprehend the nature and design of the gospel? The benefits resulting from it to man—the good it will effect in society, and the advantages to be derived by faith in its testimonies.

From a want of an understanding of the divine word, we too often detach portions of scripture from their proper subjects, and apply them to things, with which they have no

connexion; by this means we make the *Bible* contradict itself, and thus invalidate the whole testimony. We ought therefore, to be careful to understand what we read. We had better read but little, and understand that little well, than to read much, and not understand it at all.

Saint Paul, in Gal. iii. 8, says "And the scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed," verse 16, he explains this more fully, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." St. Peter having made use of this promise, concludes in these remarkable words, "Unto you first, God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities." Acts, iii. 26, Saint Paul to the Hebrews declares, this promise made to Abraham, was confirmed, by the oath of JEHOVAH. Heb. vi. 16, &c. "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for information is to them the end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec."

Such is the testimony, kind reader, in that volume which you are so engaged to send to the heathen; you must often have seen these passages—look at them attentively we beseech you, and say "Understandest thou, what thou readest."

If you understand, do you believe that promise which is confirmed by an oath, will be redeemed, by all men, being turned from their iniquities—saved from their sins—and forever blessed in Christ the promised seed? In a word do you believe that he, who is called the "Lamb of God" will take away the sin of the world.

It would be well if we should adopt the sentiment of the Apostle, which he expressed on somewhat different subject, but which may apply to this "Yet in the church, I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" R.

NOTICE.

Those friends, who have not returned the subscription papers for the Religious Inquirer, are requested to return them immediately, that subscribers may be supplied with their papers, at the commencement of its publication.

Communications leading the mind into the knowledge of scriptures, will be thankfully received, and duly attended to. We beg leave however to inform those who may favour us with a correspondence, that as the paper is published but semi-monthly, and it is desired to present the reader with sentiments on different portions of scripture, and to render it as instructive as possible, it will be necessary to study conciseness, and compress their communications into as few words as possible.

All communications coming by mail must be post paid. Our correspondents understanding that this paper is published by a society, formed for the promotion of christian knowledge, and who have taken the whole expense upon themselves, offering the paper for the small sum of one dollar, will at once see the propriety of complying with this request; and our subscribers feeling a liberal spirit, will readily comply with the terms of their subscription.

For the information of our friends in the city and its vicinity, they are notified that the Rev. Mr. CARPENTER, will preach every first and third sabbath in each month in the State-house, and every Thursday evening of each week, in the South Meeting-house—Also, on the second sabbath of each month in Windsor.